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Report Highlights:

ASA-IM Holds Soy Food Seminar for the First Time in Osaka; World Renowned Sommelier Demonstrates Marriage of Alaskan Seafood and Japanese flavors; Agro-chemical Residues on Imported Produce Still a Common Concern among Japanese Importers; Popular Singer Celebrates the Cotton Day with her Original Song; USA Rice Federation Holds Calrose Seminar in Tokyo.

General Information:

The Wasabi

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ASA-IM Holds Soy Food Seminar for the First Time in Osaka: U.S. Embassy, Tokyo's Agricultural Trade Office (ATO) Director Steve Shnitzler opened the American Soybean Association-International Marketing (ASA-IM) Soy Food Seminar and Showcase in Osaka on Friday, May 18, 2012. The seminar and showcase was the first time that this event has been held in Osaka, indicating Western Japan's importance as a soy food and production market. The event was headlined by Mr. Paul Burke, Asia Director ASA-IM, stationed in Beijing. Nine U.S. companies were represented at the showcase to meet with importers, processors and retailers about U.S. food soybean quality and availability. The United States supplied 1.9 million metric tons of soybeans to Japan in CY2011, which is 67 percent of import market share. About 19 percent of this total is in the form of IP soybeans for food use. Japan is the United States' largest market for IP soybeans in the world.



World Renowned Sommelier Demonstrates Marriage of Alaskan Seafood and Japanese flavors: The Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute held a wine and seafood seminar on May 15, 2012, in Tokyo to 40 restaurateurs and hotel food and beverage managers. The event was held at Restaurant S, an establishment owned by renowned wine sommelier Shinya Tasaki. Mr. Tasaki created 4 dishes using Alaskan Pollock and Dusky Sole using Japanese techniques and flavors, demonstrating to the seminar participants how Alaska seafood can be used to engineer creative menus that appeal to Japanese diners. Mr. Tasaki also paired the dishes with an Oregon Pinot Noir, a Washington State Riesling and an Oregon Grenache.

Mr. Tasaki has long been an effective spokesman for Alaska and U.S. seafood in Japan. ATO Director Steve Shnitzler presented Mr. Tasaki with a plaque honoring him as an Ambassador for Alaska Seafood to show our appreciation for his efforts. In addition, the ATO has been working with the city of Sakai City (near Osaka), a city famous for its high quality knives. Through these ATO contacts, Sakai City presented Mr. Takasi with a set of high quality knives to celebrate his award.

Agro-chemical Residues on Imported Produce Still a Common Concern among Japanese Importers: On May 11, 2012, U.S. Embassy, Tokyo's Agricultural Specialist, Dr. Suguru Sato, addressed members of the California Raisin Importer's Association, and presented on the status of U.S. and Japan collaboration and challenges regarding agro-chemical residues. Seminar attendees, about 25 Japanese importers, appreciated the informative seminar and the opportunity to ask questions. The great number of questions received highlighted the high level of interest among Japanese raisin importers to understand how exporters deal with agro-chemical residues.



Popular Singer Celebrates the Cotton Day with her Original Song: On May 10, 2012, Cotton Day 2012 was held in Tokyo to promote its use in Japan. Similar to previous years, the event included the participation of well known Japanese celebrities such as singer Miwa, the comedian Tsurube, and famous model Shiro. Miwa, a popular singer-songwriter sang her original song for Cotton USA, "The Season for Cotton." The event seeks to promote new and various cotton materials, designs and fashions.

USA Rice Federation Holds Calrose Seminar in Tokyo: ATO Director, Steve Shnitzler, kicked off the USA Rice Federation cooking seminar held on May 8, 2012 at the Ark Hills Café in Tokyo. The seminar was attended by over 90 local hotel and restaurant managers and chefs to learn how Calrose rice can play an important part in restaurant menus. Several dishes were served that demonstrated the versatility and unique taste of Calrose rice. The U.S. side was led by Michael Rue – Catlett Warehouse and Vice Chairman of the USA Rice Trade Policy Committee, Chris Crutchfield – American Commodity Co., and Jim Guinn and Bill Farmer, both of the USA Rice Federation. While rice imports are State Traded in Japan, U.S. rice exports reached \$292 million in 2011. In addition, the acceptance of US rice by Japanese consumers is growing. In the last few years, U.S. rice has been selling briskly through the internet and AEON supermarkets now stocks U.S. rice on their shelves.

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